

CACTUS FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL
(*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*)

STATUS: Distinct vertebrate population in Arizona endangered (62 FR 10730, March 10, 1997) with proposed critical habitat (67 FR 71032, November 27, 2002).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A small reddish-brown, or sometimes grayish, bird with a cream-colored belly streaked with reddish-brown. Males average 62 g (2.2 oz) and females average 75 g (2.6 oz). Length is approximately 17 cm (6.75 in), including tail. The eyes are yellow, the crown is lightly streaked, and there are no ear tufts. Paired black spots on the back of head suggest “eyes”. The tail is long for an owl and reddish-brown in color with dark bars. The pygmy-owl is nonmigratory throughout its range. Their diet includes other birds, lizards, insects, and small mammals.

HABITAT: The pygmy-owl has been found in riverbottom woodlands, and palo verde cacti-mixed scrub associations of the Sonoran desert. In central and southern Arizona, the pygmy-owl is currently found primarily in Sonoran desertscrub vegetation with some locations in riparian drainages and semi-desert grassland vegetation communities. The cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl nests in cavities, primarily in saguaro cacti, but they will also use tree cavities. Pygmy-owls are found below 1,200 m (4,000 ft) in elevation.

RANGE: Historic: The subspecies is geographically isolated into eastern and western populations. The western population extends from lowland central Arizona south through western Mexico, to the States of Colima and Michoacan, Mexico. The eastern population is distributed from southern Texas south through the States of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The historic range in Arizona extends north from the U.S-Mexico border to New River, to the Gila Box (East) and to the Cabeza Prieta Mountains (West). Historically documented in Maricopa, Yuma, Santa Cruz, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, Pinal, Gila, and Cochise Counties, Arizona.

Current: Since 1993, when formal pygmy-owl surveys using a protocol were initiated, the documented distribution of pygmy-owls has been limited to Pima and Pinal counties.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: The species is threatened by the destruction, modification, and curtailment of its habitat and range; possible competition with introduced bird species for food and nest sites; and potentially inbreeding due to increasingly fragmented and small isolated populations within the state.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: In Arizona: U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, State of Arizona, military and private.

NOTES: Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.

CURRENT STATUS: In response to a court order, we are re-evaluating critical habitat for this species. Approximately 731,712 acres of critical habitat were designated on July 12, 1999 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999 [64 FR 37419]) in areas within Pima, Cochise, Pinal, and Maricopa counties in Arizona. On January 9, 2001, a coalition of plaintiffs filed a lawsuit with the District Court of Arizona challenging the validity of the Service's listing of the Arizona population of the pygmy-owl as an endangered species and the designation of its critical habitat. On September 21, 2001, the Court upheld the listing of the pygmy-owl in Arizona but, at our request, and without otherwise ruling on the critical habitat issues, remanded the designation of critical habitat for preparation of a new analysis of the economic and other effects of the designation (National Association of Home Builders et al. v. Norton, Civ.-00-0903-PHX-SRB). The Court also vacated the critical habitat designation during the remand. We proposed to redesignate critical habitat to the Federal Register on November 27, 2002 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2002 [67 FR 71032]). The proposal includes approximately 1,208,000 acres in portions of Pima and Pinal counties, Arizona. Based on the Court order, we must issue a final rule by July 31, 2003. The plaintiff's appeal of the listing decision is still pending.